CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

Promoting Gender Sensitivity and Community Involvement in Schools: Facilitator's Guide

LEADERSHIP MODULE 3

NAME: _____

Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support Program

Continuous Professional Development for Teachers

Leadership Module 3

Promoting gender sensitivity and community involvement in schools:

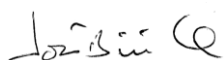*Facilitator's manual*

Acknowledgements

Foreword

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology introduced the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) in all primary schools in Malawi in 2007. PCAR follows an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach and has great potential for improving the quality of education in the country. The OBE approach emphasizes learner-centred/participatory methods and continuous assessment. In this way, it ensures that every learner is given the attention he/she deserves in order to attain the learning outcomes.

However, the implementation and management of the reform in schools has not been without challenges since some of the elements of the reform demand that teachers develop new skills and ways of operating in order to successfully cope with the innovations in OBE. Although teachers and school managers were oriented to PCAR in general and OBE in particular, the orientation was not sufficient due to time and resource constraints. A one-off week-long orientation session to PCAR was not sufficient for teachers to be helped on how to overcome the challenges that they encounter during the implementation of the curriculum. This is partly because new challenges keep cropping-up all the time in the classroom or school. In the face of reform, teachers need support all the time until they attain full mastery of the requisite skills. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support for teachers is known to be instrumental in the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. CPD can best be provided in the zone, cluster and within the school itself.

In an effort to support the development of teachers in close collaboration with MoEST, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) programme (February 2010 to March, 2013). This program is providing assistance for establishing a system for providing CPD that can be conducted in schools and clusters. The USAID-funded MTPDS program provides technical support to the MoEST by working with curriculum specialists from Malawi Institute of Education and other education professionals from various institutions to identify the specific needs of school managers and classroom teachers for Standards 1-4, with a special focus on Literacy and Leadership. In order to address the identified needs, training modules are developed in the two areas. These modules are used to train Primary Education Advisors, head teachers and CPD mentors. The head teachers and CPD mentors, in turn, use the materials to support teachers' professional development in their schools.

I sincerely hope that the school heads, CPD mentors and teachers will find the modules useful in addressing their needs to ensure that PCAR and OBE are successfully implemented. This will hopefully contribute to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning as well as learner achievement in our schools.

John J. Bisika

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Introduction to Leadership Module III

Welcome to Leadership Module III. So far, you have gone through Leadership Modules I and II. Leadership Module I introduced school leaders to the structures necessary to institutionalize a school-based CPD program. The module also provided the tools necessary for developing a CPD program in a school. Leadership Module II provided school leaders with content on some of the issues that a well-designed CPD program ought to address. Module II addressed three issues, namely, how school managers are best placed to take on instructional leadership roles, continuous assessment in the school and managing educational change. In Module III, school leaders will look at managing gender issues and mobilizing community involvement in supporting school activities.

As usual, the design of the module encourages sharing of ideas and experiences among school managers on how to manage the CPD programs in schools. The ultimate goal is to give a strong foundation in Leadership skills for managing school-based CPD programs.

It is important to mention the fact that the selected ideas and activities in this module are meant to serve as eye-openers to school managers, but not to be treated as the only ideas or activities to be used when managing CPD programs. School managers are therefore expected to create more of such ideas and activities as they design programs for instructional leadership in their schools.

School managers are advised to take note of helpful ideas and activities as they go through this module. Such ideas must be recorded in the spaces provided within and at the end of their modules. Keeping a record of ideas gained during training will make this module serve the purpose of helping managers keep track of their professional growth in instructional leadership.

Facilitators need to carefully prepare before training starts. This needs to be done at least two to three days before training begins to allow for time to reflect on how best to present the work in this module within the allocated time for the activities in each unit. Reading in advance will help facilitators to spot areas that need more time and those which need less time or additional teaching resources. If more time has to be made available, facilitators can come up with appropriate strategies that can enable them to cover the work in less time but without compromising the output of training. Facilitators may wish to prepare notes and guidelines on flip charts as part of their preparations. Such levels of preparation cannot be achieved the night before the training. Hence all facilitators are encouraged to spend more time understanding the content in the module and find room for consultations where necessary at least two to three days in advance of training.

Schedule

This is a suggested schedule. Adapt it according to your area's needs.

Time	Task
8:00	Registration and seating
8:30-9:45	Welcome Review of Leadership Module 2
9:45 – 10:00	Break
10:00 – 12:00	UNIT 1: Managing gender issues in the school
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:30	UNIT 2: Mobilizing community involvement in supporting school activities
2:30-2:45	Break
2:45 – 3:15	UNIT 2 (continued)
3:15-3:30	Review of training and discussion
3:30	End of training

Review of Leadership Module 2
(**Estimated time -** I hour)

Introduction

Leadership module 2 covered some of the roles that school leaders should play to strengthen CPD activities and improve teachers' capacity in ensuring that effective instruction and learning are taking place. Before going through the new set of content for Leadership Module 3, it is very important to have the leaders share their experiences on how knowledge gained from module 2 impacted their work as school leaders.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, participants should:

- present what they have done in their schools in respect to Leadership Module 2 training
- describe successes and challenges encountered
- discuss how they dealt with some challenges
- develop plans for implementing ideas from leadership trainings.

Activity 1: Sharing experiences on implementation of ideas from Leadership Module 2.

1. Let participants individually:
   a. write down what they have done in their schools following their exposure to Leadership Module 2.
   b. identify their successes and challenges during the implementation of ideas learnt in Leadership Module 2.

2. In groups, let participants share experiences on:

   a. what they have done in their schools following their exposure to Leadership Module 2.
   b. how they dealt with some of the common challenges reported by individual school leaders.
   c. develop sample plans for addressing the common challenges.
   d. report their shared experiences and plans.

3. In plenary, let participants discuss presentations from each group.

4. **Consolidate ideas from the activity.**

Activity 2: Compiling future plans

1. Let participants individually:
   a. make plans they will use to improve implementation of ideas learnt from previous leadership trainings.
   b. share their plans with other participants.
2. In plenary, let participants discuss their plans.
3. Consolidate ideas from the activity.

Lessons from Leadership Module 1 and 2 and plans for this year

The onset of another year in CPD activities offers an opportunity to review how the past year went, and what we can learn from it. PEAs reported seeing delays in take-off of CPD activities in schools and clusters, due to a number of reasons. Some reported reasons were:

- Weak leadership in schools
- Inadequate resources for monitoring
- Planning problems that left schools feeling overwhelmed due to too many interventions
- Understaffing which made available teachers too busy to engage in CPD activities
- Lack of incentives at school level, including no allowances
- CPD Stages and tools were difficult for some teachers to understand without guidance
- CPD was seen as for Standards 1- 4 teachers only
- Contradiction between initial primary teacher training content and that of CPD. (Some teachers were paired with IPTE student teachers who were using unmodified PCAR ideas which in some cases contradicted with CPD ideas. CPD activities propose approaches that are meant to iron out problems introduced by the PCAR curriculum)

Some of the above mentioned issues indicate reasons why some school instructional leaders failed to establish CPD programs in their schools. However, some school leaders took initial steps in establishing CPD activities, but with no follow up. Some of these schools established school-based structures but had difficulties in implementing particular aspects of the CPD cycle, including failure to make needed arrangements for proper scheduling of CPD trainings, as well as failure to identify content experts and CPD facilitators.

PEAs plans for this year

When PEAs were asked about their future plans to implement in CPD as they move into the second year of CPD activities, the following suggestions came up:

Getting started

- Select CPD mentors who have received CPD training
- Make the CPD mentor responsible for school-based CPD
- Involve the whole school staff so as to bring on board Standard 5-8 teachers
- PEAs should create checklists for requirements from CPD mentors (action plans, CPD calendars, reports, etc.)
- CPD mentors instructed to write monthly and term reports on CPD activities
- CPD mentors instructed to submit action plans at the beginning of each term and school year
- Identify content experts as resource persons for zones, districts, divisions

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Lessons from Leadership Module 1 and 2 and plans for this year (continued)

Strengthening CPD

- Nurture talent and enhance self-esteem in order to boost intrinsic/self-motivation.
- Intensify cluster CPD meetings.
- Revisit staffing positions to achieve better teacher-pupils ratios.
- Publicize success stories from schools and share success stories.
- Encourage teachers to be the agent of change they want to see in their schools.
- Organize inspirational talks from interesting people, e.g. excellent teachers, alumni.
- Form study circles where teachers read education or instructional articles and discuss them.
- Encourage peer classroom observation.
- Introduce demonstration lessons.
- Intensify monitoring and supervision.
- Hold CPD review meetings once a term with CPD mentors, head teachers and section heads.
- Provide refresher training (probably in the forthcoming CPD trainings) on setting up school based CPDs to clarify processes and activities that school heads and school staff are supposed to do at school and cluster levels.
- Use food as an incentive for teachers to come to CPD meetings (each school has to organize funds, foodstuffs and utensils and have them ready for use at meetings).
- Carry out exchange visits between schools at cluster and zone levels, and even beyond.
- Hold open days or symposiums in which teachers present their work, findings or innovative ideas for improving teaching.
- DEMs offices should fund CPD plans in schools.

While all these are great ideas, they need not be done all at once. PEAs need to help schools select which ones are best to start with and create a plan, a time table and a reporting schedule to ensure that those activities are carried out and reported. In schools where CPD is already established and working well, the focus can shift to strengthening it through monitoring and planning for the future.

UNIT 1: Managing gender issues in the school

Introduction

Treating males and females equitably in the education system forms the basis for a favorable teaching and learning environment. Good education systems are those that provide structures for both male and female students to perform well and achieve their full potential.

Historically, education systems have not treated males and females equitably, resulting in gender imbalances. Such imbalances can result in problems such as sexual harassment, gender-based violence and use of abusive language. Gender disparities are inconsistent with the current goals of education systems. Gender disparities lead to broader societal problems such as low literacy rates for women, low participation of women in development activities, and fewer women leaders at local, national, and global levels. All these problems cause the disempowerment of women, which adversely affects society in various ways. School managers need to encourage gender awareness by communicating gender policies, modeling gender appropriate behavior and fostering fair treatment of both males and females. Hence, this unit discusses gender issues and their implications on teaching and learning.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, participants should be able to:

- explain the meanings of different terms associated with gender.
- identify gender issues that undermine effective learning of all children.
- describe the effects of gender issues on teaching and learning.
- explain how to deal with gender issues in their schools.

Estimated time: 2 hours

Suggested resources

- markers
- chart paper
- posters
- stick on paper/masking tape

- Various gender statistics on learners, teachers, head teachers, PEAs, DEMs, EDMs at school, cluster, zone, district, division, and national levels (Facilitators must provide available statistics on the named parameters).

Activity 1: Discussing meanings of terms associated with gender

1. Let participants individually write down some terms associated with gender that they are familiar with.
2. In pairs, let participants share their understanding of the meanings of the terms.
3. In plenary, let participants report their suggested ideas.
4. Consolidate participants' responses.

Gender related terms

- **Gender** is a socially-defined perception of the roles, behaviors, and attitudes that males and females use within society.
- **Gender roles** are tasks assigned to males and females according to sociocultural constructs.
- **Gender issues** are controversial points of discussion around the social or cultural roles or traits of the male or female sex. Gender issues often help shape peoples' attitudes, behaviors or policy.
- **A gender stereotype** is an expectation of male or female roles within society, which may or may not be based on fact.
- **Gender bias** is a discriminatory attitude, practice or policy based on socially-constructed gender roles, which favors one sex at the expense of the other and limits an individual's full capabilities.
- **Gender equality** is the application of equal status, rights, responsibility, and respect to all persons regardless of sex.
- **Gender equity** is the principle of fair treatment for males and females based on their unique needs. Gender equity considers the differences between genders without favoring or discriminating against any one gender.

Note: Some scholars suggest that the term 'gender equality' is prone to misunderstanding, as it ignores the unique biological differences between males and females that necessitate special consideration, rather than strictly equal treatment. For this reason, such scholars combine the terms 'gender equity' and 'gender equality'. For more see UNESCO (2000), *Gender Equality and Equity*.

- **Gender balance** refers to equality of opportunities, practices and representation between males and females. Unequal opportunities, practices, or representation between males and females create **gender imbalances**.
- **Gender disparity** is a gap created by differences in gender due to unequal treatment.

- **Gender appropriateness** is the fair treatment of males and females based on non-discriminatory attitudes, behaviors, or policy.

Sources: Malawi Institute of Education (1997a; 1997b; 1997c), UNESCO (2000).

Activity 2: Identifying gender issues in the schools

1. Provide participants with gender statistics that you were able to collect involving numbers and percentages for the following:
   a. female teachers in Malawi?
   b. female teachers, PEAs and ACCOs for a particular district?
   c. female DEMs in a particular division?
   d. female EDMs in Malawi?

2. Ask participants to get into groups, and:
   a. analyze the following gender statistics:
      i. female teachers in their schools or zone.
      ii. female head teachers in their zone.
      iii. ratio of boys to girls in their classroom.
      iv. ratio of boys to girls in their school.
      v. ratio of boys to girls in the most recent selection to secondary school.
      vi. differences in these ratios between the most recent selection and the previous one.
      vii. differences in these ratios over the years.
   b. write down the gender problems associated with the disparities in the statistics and their effects on teaching and learning.
   c. identify other gender issues and their effects on teaching and learning.
3. In plenary, let groups report their responses.
4. Consolidate their findings.

Activity 3: Discussing ways of dealing with gender issues

1. Ask participants to get into groups based on their schools or clusters, where possible and let participants:
   a. identify and record ways in which they can deal with gender issues in their:
      • schools
      • zones
      • districts (as raised in their findings).
   b. display their work on the walls.
   c. conduct a gallery walk and write down their observations.
2. In plenary, let participants discuss their observations.
3. Consolidate their observations.

Gender issues, effects and strategies for dealing with them		
Gender issue	**Effect**	**Strategies for dealing with issues**
Biased and abusive language	• embarrasses affected girls or boys • makes them reluctant to participate • causes low self esteem • causes learners' absenteeism or even dropping out, leading to low literacy levels and fewer women leaders at local, national and international levels • causes underachievement at societal level • causes resentment	• train teachers through school-based CPD on use of gender-appropriate language • use checklist forms to detect gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate language • encourage teachers to use gender-appropriate language both inside and outside the classroom
Biased teacher-learner interaction	• causes embarrassment to the learner • causes stigma • reduces participation for both boys and girls. • causes underachievement in learners at societal level (local, national and international)	• train teachers through school-based CPD on use of gender-appropriate interaction • use checklist forms to detect gender-balanced and gender-imbalanced interaction
Sexual harassment (e.g. touching girls' breasts, embarrassing words or actions alluding to sexuality i.e. leering, "flashing," etc.	• causes trauma • causes alienation • sows distrust between the learner and the teacher • causes underachievement	• use checklist forms to detect abusive behavior among teachers and learners • put in place a clear statement of the code of conduct • strict enforcement of the code of conduct • discuss sexual harassment with the community leaders to find ways of dealing with the problem • alert teachers to their special responsibility for providing a safe and secure environment for all learners
Denial of access to some facilities, e.g., desks	• causes low participation in school activities • promotes underachievement • promotes absenteeism • causes dropping out of school	• check that school rules and regulations do not discriminate against a particular sex • review the use of space and equipment in the school and ensure that both boys and girls have access to the facilities

Gender issues, effects and strategies for dealing with them

Gender issue	Effect	Strategies for dealing with issues
Biases in assignment of responsibilities	• increases passivity in school activities • erodes self confidence • results in under-achievement at local, national and international level	• train teachers through CPD to assign equal responsibilities to both girls and boys • supervise to ensure that teachers do not discriminate in allocation of responsibilities to girls and boys • make deliberate use of women achievers at local, national and international levels
Undermining capabilities of females in sciences and mathematics	• causes low self-image • increases passivity • creates frustration • promotes absenteeism • promotes dropping out • causes under-achievement at societal level (local, national and international)	• sensitize teachers on how to interest girls in mathematics and sciences • encourage teachers to support both boys and girls equally in mathematics and sciences • supervise teachers to ensure that they do not discriminate against one sex during the teaching and learning of mathematics and science • assign female teachers to handle mathematics and sciences in senior classes to act as role models • use examples of women achievers at local, national and international levels
School rules and regulations that discriminate against a particular sex (some of them based on cultural beliefs and practices)	• increases passivity of learners in school activities • causes under-achievement at local, national and international level	• review school rules and regulations that discriminate against a particular sex • enforce policies that promote both sexes
Lack of proper sanitary facilities for girls	• causes absenteeism • causes embarrassment • causes underachievement • promotes the dropping out of school	• mobilize the community to construct girl-friendly washroom facilities
Sources: Malawi Institute of Education (1997a; 1997b; 1997c), UNESCO (2000).		

Conclusion

Some of the common gender issues prevailing in our schools include sexual harassment, denial of access to facilities and biased teacher-learner interaction. Gender disparities have adverse effects on society, causing broader problems at local, national and global levels. Schools have an important role in addressing these problems by preparing future generations that have greater gender awareness, and can act positively to create a better, more equal world. School managers should therefore strive to create a favorable teaching and learning environment by handling gender issues properly. They should identify and deal with these gender issues to ensure the provision of a favorable school environment.

Self-reflection

Give participants five minutes for self-reflection. Ask them to think about how they have handled gender issues in their schools before. Let them think about what they intend to do differently in their schools. Ask them to write down their thoughts.

Suggested INSET at the zone level

Ask participants to identify gender issues that they would like to discuss further with other teachers at the cluster level.

UNIT 2: Mobilizing community involvement in supporting school activities

Introduction

Educational policies highlight the importance of involving members of the community in running school affairs. Active school communities are involved in initiating school development activities, encouraging parents to send their children to school and ensuring that recommendations made by the Ministry of Education are implemented in the school. Active community participation promotes effective teaching and learning.

However, it seems that in most schools, community members neither get involved nor feel a sense of ownership of their schools. Some schools may not even have School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs). In some schools where SMCs and PTAs exist, these structures are noted to have limited operations. School managers need to gain knowledge and skills on how to mobilize communities to get involved in running school affairs, including supporting continuing professional development of teachers. This unit discusses the importance of community involvement and ways of mobilizing communities to support school activities.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, participants should be able to:

- explain the term 'community involvement.'
- identify common misconceptions about community participation in school affairs.
- describe the roles played by different stakeholders in supporting school activities.
- explain the importance of involving the community in school activities.
- identify challenges to community participation in school activities.
- identify solutions to the identified challenges regarding community participation.
- suggest ways of mobilizing community members to gain their support for school activities.
- describe the importance of using a social contract in community involvement.

Estimated time: 2 hours

Suggested resources

1. Chart paper
2. Markers

3. Masking tape/prestick
4. Articles in recent newspapers, magazines or any relevant newsletters talking about the involvement of stakeholders in schools

Activity 1: Identifying common misconceptions in community involvement

1. Let participants brainstorm their understanding of the term 'community involvement.'
2. As a whole group, let participants discuss the meaning of the term 'community involvement'.
3. Consolidate the meaning of the term 'community involvement.'
4. In smaller groups, ask participants to think about a previous experience they have had with community involvement in school activities considering the following questions:
   a) How was the community involved?
   b) What difference did community involvement make?
   c) What problems were observed?
   d) What misconceptions, if any, were observed?
   e) How were the misconceptions addressed?
5. In plenary, let participants report their responses.
6. Consolidate the responses.

Meaning of the term 'community involvement'

Community involvement refers to the active participation of community members in school activities in order for the school to meet its physical, professional and learners' academic needs. Physical needs refer to construction and maintenance of school infrastructure, equipment and facilities, such as classroom blocks, toilets and playing fields. Professional needs refer to issues pertaining to teachers' performance. Learners' academic needs refer to learners' achievement. For example, assisting learners in improving reading and writing at home and checking learners' performance in school.

Misconceptions about community involvement

Some of the misconceptions about community involvement in school activities are as follows:

- community cannot monitor learners' academic work, but should only be involved in molding bricks and constructing buildings.
- the school belongs to the head teacher and teachers that are at the school.
- members of the community cannot monitor the attendance of teachers and learners.
- community cannot participate in decision making in regards to utilization of school funds.

Source: Government of Malawi (2004).

Activity 2: Discussing the importance of involving the community in school activities

1. In groups, let participants discuss the importance of involving the community in school activities.
2. In plenary, let them report their responses.
3. Consolidate the responses.

Importance of community involvement in school activities

Community involvement in school activities is important because it:

- is a key factor to school improvement.
- promotes access and equity in education.
- promotes the quality of teaching and learning.
- promotes school ownership.
- reduces conflicts between the school and the community.
- reduces incidents of vandalism of school property.
- facilitates resource mobilization.
- helps in monitoring how children learn.

Activity 3: Identifying key stakeholders and their roles

1. Ask participants to divide into groups and:
   a. identify school stakeholders.
   b. discuss roles that they play in supporting teaching and learning.
   c. suggest other roles they may play in improving teaching and learning in their schools.
2. In plenary, let participants report their responses.
3. Consolidate the responses.

Key school stakeholders and their roles

Key stakeholder	Roles
School Management Committee (SMC)	• Helping create a vision for the school • Initiating school improvement activities • Monitoring performance, attendance and punctuality of both teachers and pupils • Managing resources at the school, including finances • Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning • Assisting in the enrolment of learners • Ensuring that recommendations made by the Ministry of Education are implemented • Advising the proprietor on whether the conduct of the school is in accordance with the wishes of the local community • Checking, inspecting and maintaining the school with the help of other community members • Overseeing the development and implementation of the school improvement plan • Initiating and conducting regular meetings
Parents and Teachers Association (PTA)	• Electing the SMC and holding it accountable in school activities • Initiating infrastructure development activities • Supporting academic and professional initiatives at the school • Mobilizing the communities to support the school • Making the SMC aware of the community's concerns regarding the primary school • Encouraging the SMC to hold regular meetings and report on the actions undertaken • Taking a lead in fund-raising activities • Encouraging learner attendance and punctuality
Traditional Authorities	• Encouraging communities to be fully involved in school management • Holding village heads accountable for their participation in school development activities • Encouraging parents to send their children to school • Overcoming barriers that prevent children from attending school • Observing the school calendar when conducting traditional rites, e.g. initiation ceremonies

Key stakeholder	Roles
Communities	• Taking an interest in the management of their school • Getting fully involved in school development activities • Monitoring the academic performance of their children • Encouraging children to attend school • Overcoming barriers that prevent children from attending school • Electing and holding accountable the SMCs and PTAs • Cultivating a cordial relationship with school staff • Providing resources
Village Development Committee (VDC)	• Coordinating the planning processes of school development activities within their village • Overcoming barriers that prevent children from attending school
Area Development Committee (ADC)	• Coordinating planning processes of school development activities within their area • Settling school related disputes among various community level institutions
District Council	• Controlling educational activities in the district • Assessing, prioritizing and funding the implementation of education plans • Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the plans
Development partners (donors, NGOs, and FBOs)	• Providing services and resources to supplement government efforts in the education sector • Influencing on-going policy dialogue • Building capacity in the district line ministries and the district planning structures • Ensuring that any provided support is coordinated
Area Executive Committee (public officers from various ministries, e.g. Education, Gender and Community Services, Health, Youth, etc)	• Forwarding school improvement plans to the district for inclusion in the district education plans and district development plans • Approving, deferring or rejecting specific application for development funding made by the SMC • Channeling the education fund from the district development fund (DDF) to the schools
NB: There could be other initiatives that are equally effective. For example, in some contexts village heads near a school have formed a village heads committee. The chairperson for this committee look after and supports the effectiveness of the school management committee and the PTA.	

Activity 4: Identifying challenges to community involvement in school activities and their solutions

1. In groups, let participants:

    a. identify challenges to community involvement in school activities.

    b. discuss the solutions to the challenges.

2. In plenary, let them present their responses.

3. Consolidate the responses.

Challenges to community involvement in school activities include the following:

- Lack of knowledge by both community members and teachers on their roles and power limits.
- Expectation among some community members to receive monetary incentives each time they are involved in school activities.
- Lack of community structures in some schools to mobilize people to participate in school affairs.
- Weak community leadership.
- Misconception by some teachers that the community members should not be involved in monitoring academic work, but should only be involved in molding bricks and constructing buildings.

The following are some solutions to the above challenges:

1. Schools should advocate an open-door policy for the community. School leaders and members of staff should encourage the community to come to the school and participate in the affairs of the school. School leaders and members of staff should allow for a discussion on community ownership of the school. The community should be encouraged to see the school as theirs and should be supported by school leaders in fundraising for the school. This could also remove community members' expectation for monetary incentives when involved.
2. School leaders should help the community to establish structures for mobilizing people to participate in school affairs. Such structures could include open days, cultural fairs, literacy afternoons (poetry recitals, drama performance), and study circles, among others. Creating such structures also requires teachers to open up to the community and regard community members as partners with equal interests. In this way, the school can

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act as a hub of the community's social and intellectual life. The school can also help strengthen community leadership, thereby reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings amongst community leaders.

3. Sensitizing communities and teachers on the National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School management.
4. Conducting research on what is actually causing communities not to be involved, and using the findings to address the causes.

Activity 5: Identifying ways of mobilizing community members and sustaining their support for school activities

1. Ask participants to do the following:
    a. write down one strategy they can use to mobilize the community to participate in each of the following school activities:
        i.   improving learners' academic performance.
        ii. professional development for teachers.
        iii. infrastructure development at the school.
    b. identify ways of sustaining the support.
2. In groups, let them compare their responses and come up with one consolidated list.
3. In plenary, let them present their responses.
4. Consolidate their responses.

Strategies for mobilizing community members and sustaining their support for school activities

School leaders should:

- encourage formation of committees, for example SMC and PTA.
- create opportunities for the community to participate in school activities including development and implementation of the school action plans.
- involve members of the community to attend school closing ceremonies and open days in order for them to appreciate the role played by the school.
- encourage the community and school to sign a social contract to enable each stakeholder play its role in school development activities.
- allow the community to use school premises for various functions.
- sensitize all stakeholders on their roles in supporting school activities.

Activity 6: Discussing the importance of using a social contract in community involvement

Social Contract

In Activity 5, you may have identified signing a social contract as a strategy for mobilizing community support in your school. A social contract is a negotiated agreement between parties in which roles and responsibilities are shared in order to ensure smooth running of an organization or school.

1. Read the case study below and answer the questions that follow.

Case study: Doing their part

For the first time in many years, the atmosphere at Mwanasunga Primary School was unusually positive. There was a new head teacher. The previous head teacher had left after pleading for months with the DEM's office to be posted elsewhere. He had given up on this problematic school. He alleged that the community had no interest in the school's welfare. Buildings were dilapidated, and classrooms were crowded. There were no toilets. Learners used a nearby bush as a toilet.

The new head teacher's name was Mrs. Zione Uzitha. Mrs. Uzitha started her first day by calling for a meeting with parents, chiefs, religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, representatives from government departments, and every stakeholder in the community. They gathered in the Standard Eight classroom. Mrs. Uzitha spoke to the stakeholders about the conditions at the school, and her vision for the education of the learners. She told them about the importance of working together. She told the community she respected them, and welcomed their views on how to work together and bring change to the school. She said there was need that all parties understand their role in the school and in the community. Each party had an obligation to do their part. As a school, the staff of Mwanasunga was going to dedicate themselves to improving teaching and learning at the school. On their part, parents and community leaders promised to support the school, staff and learners in their infrastructural, professional and academic needs.

As the meeting ended, expectations were high. Was everyone going to respect their part of the agreement? Was the school going to turn the corner, and forge a new era? How would the new head teacher be different from the previous one? How would the community respond to the energy brought by the new head teacher?

2. In groups, let participants discuss the following:
   a. Imagine that you were one of the people who attended this meeting. Out of the issues raised, what would you tackle first? Why?

      b. What would be the roles of the following parties in tackling the issues:

        i. Head teacher and staff?

        ii. Learners?

        iii. SMC?

        iv. PTA?

        v. Chiefs?

        vi. Community members?

      c. How would you ensure that each stakeholder plays his/her role(s)?

      d. What term is used to describe such agreements?

      e. What other situations in your community would require social contracts for facilitating school development activities?

      f. What is the importance of using a social contract to promote community involvement in school activities?

3. In plenary, participate in presenting your group responses.

4. Individually take note of the consolidated responses.

Meaning and characteristics of a social contract in a school

A social contract

A social contract is a negotiated agreement between parties for sharing roles and responsibilities to ensure smooth operation of a school and quality education for children. The parties at school level include: school staff, learners, community leaders, PTAs and SMCs. The other parties may include government, NGOs and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs).

A social contract:

- defines the roles and responsibilities of parties in managing a school development activity.
- defines the benefits of adhering to the roles and responsibilities by different parties.
- identifies how the agreement will be monitored.
- spells out what to do if parties fail to meet their obligations.

Importance of using a social contract in promoting community involvement in school activities

Using a social contract in promoting community involvement in school activities is important for the following reasons:

- It promotes collective efforts for improved quality of education.
- It enables everyone to understand their own roles and those of others to avoid conflicts.
- It empowers the community to solve problems and make decisions.
- It promotes a sense of ownership of the school.

Source: Government of Malawi (2004).

Conclusion

Primary schools in Malawi belong to communities. It is important that communities play an active role in promoting school activities, including supporting professional and academic work of the school as well as infrastructure development projects. School managers, therefore, should encourage and support the communities to participate in various development activities in order to improve the quality of education.

Self-reflection

Having gone through this unit, ask participants to think about strategies that they will use to mobilize the community to support professional and academic work of the school.

Suggested INSET at the zone level

Ask participants to think about aspects of school-community involvement they would like to discuss further with other school managers at the cluster level.

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